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ABSTRACT

Designed for use by those administrative personnel in local school districts who are responsible for preparing written releases of the district's educational quality assessment (EQA), this booklet contains aids and suggestions for making the release more effective. Each section of the booklet deals with a different aspect of writing the EQA, providing a few hints and then offering extensive illustrations taken from actual releases. Topics covered are (1) the introduction, (2) the areas measured, (3) the history of the EQA program, (4) the collection of data, (5) narrative of results, (6) charts and graphs, (7) use of results, (8) conditions influencing achievement, (9) questions and answers about EQA, (10) the preamble and goals of quality education, and (11) the conclusion. (FL)

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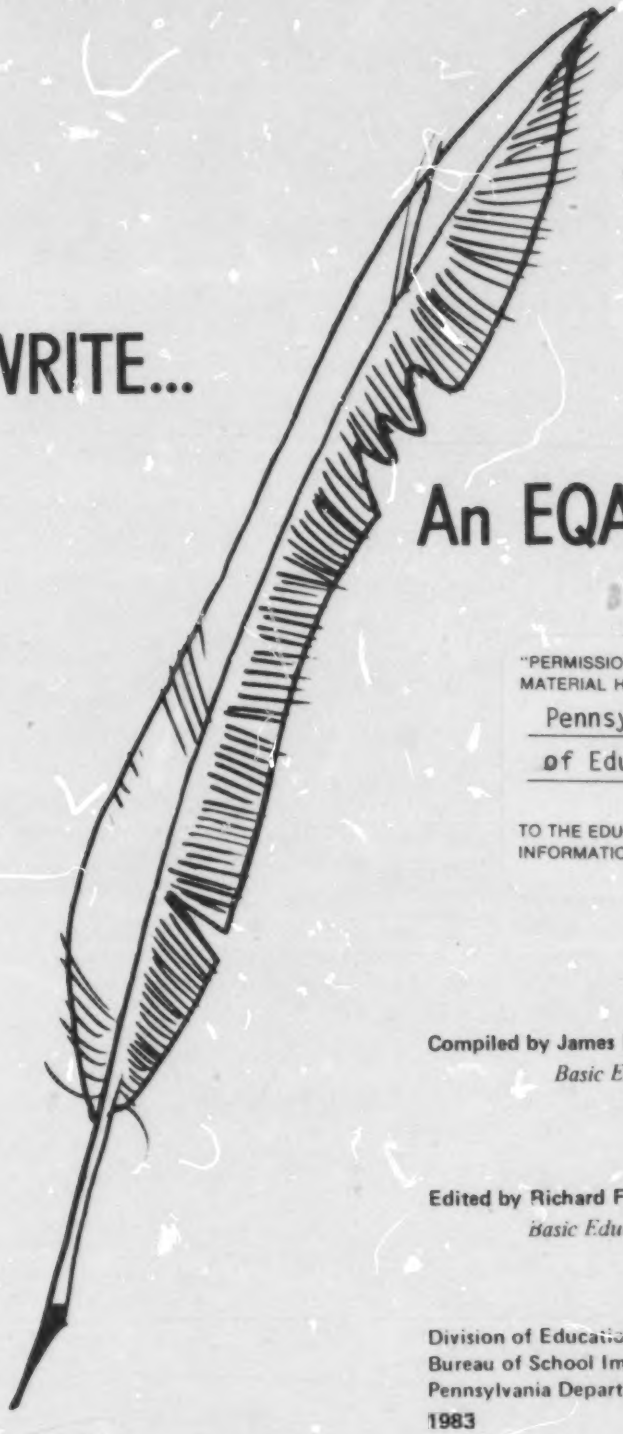
Educational Quality Assessment



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HOW TO WRITE...

An EQA Release

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Bureau of School Improvement
Pennsylvania Department of Education
1983

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This handbook is designed exclusively as an aid for those administrative personnel in the local school district who are responsible for public relations, news release writing and/or communications assignments.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Dick Thornburgh, Governor

Department of Education
Robert C. Wilburn, Secretary

Bureau of School Improvement
Donald L. Clark, Director

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Preface

This publication is dedicated to providing aids for preparing a written release of your Educational Quality Assessment (EQA) results. The release may be in the form of a district newsletter, newspaper article, or even a paid newspaper ad. Graphics are always helpful. After a few helpful hints, most of the contents of this publication are sample news releases -- most of which are replications of actual districts' efforts -- which can be copied or rewritten as desired.

Using the Manual

The samples are divided into components from which to choose (copy or rewrite) when developing your own total release. The components are:

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The History of the EQA Program	15
The Collection of Data	17
Narrative of Results	19
Charts and Graphs of Results	22
Use of Results	35
Conditions Influencing Achievement	36
Questions and Answers About EQA	40
Preamble and Goals of Quality Education	42
The Conclusion	44

All of the components need not be included in all news releases. At the beginning of each section, situations in which a component may be particularly useful is explained. Select the sample components which best fit your situation, modify them to meet your needs and "piece together" a news release with very little time and effort. Sometimes two of the samples will fit together to create a component selection. But first, review "A General Rule for Release Writing."

A GENERAL RULE FOR RELEASE WRITING

Again, whether it's for a written school board report or for a news release, there is a general rule that should help us write all assessment results.

The rule is one that journalists use to write a news story:

-- WHO
-- WHAT
-- WHEN
-- WHERE
-- WHY
-- HOW

For example:

WHO SAID IT OR WHO DID IT

Upper Penn's fifth, eighth and eleventh grade students scored well in all areas tested in the Educational Quality Assessment taken last March.

In a report to the Upper Penn Board of Education today, Superintendent John Doe said....

WHAT WAS SAID OR DONE

Much work needs to be continued, especially in the area of math.

WHEN IT TOOK PLACE

Today (announcement)
March (test)

WHERE IT TOOK PLACE

At the Upper Penn Board of Education meeting (announcement)
In the Upper Penn Junior High School (test)
In Upper Penn School District (improvement)

WHY AND HOW

The Educational Quality Assessment Program was given to every fifth, eighth and eleventh grader in the district last March as a service to the school district by the Department of Education. The assessment is used to help administrators and directors make decisions about the educational programs of the district.

The Educational Quality Assessment Program helped to determine how well students perform in 14 areas. Questions include reading comprehension items, math skill items....

THE INTRODUCTION

The way an article begins usually determines how many people will read it. Therefore, it is very important to get the audience drawn into the article in the first few paragraphs. Some sample introductions follow.

Sample 1

> Who wants quality education? The answer to that question is easy -- everyone does! A much more difficult question to answer, however, is "Just what is quality education?" The answers to that question can be as varied as the people who respond to it.
>
> Devising an objective, systematic means of evaluating a school district's performance, that is, the quality of its educational program, is the goal of Pennsylvania's Educational Quality Assessment (EQA) program.
>
> Many states have assessment plans of one type or another, but Pennsylvania's plan, the EQA program, has some features which other states do not have.
>
> Pennsylvania's model includes an assessment of the social and personal development of a student in addition to his/her academic achievement. Another distinctive feature of the EQA program is that it recognizes that learning involves not only the school, but also, and very importantly, the home and community.
>
> Another important feature of Pennsylvania's assessment plan is its recognition that schooling does not take place in a vacuum, that what a school can accomplish is influenced by the resources at its disposal -- whether physical, financial, or human. EQA is aware that the effect of a school on a child is intrinsically related to the influence of the home and/or community.

Sample 2

> Educational Quality Assessment, a service of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, is an assessment program developed by educational experts to measure how well students are performing in fourteen areas. Since the results are determined partly by the nature of the community, school board, staff, students and parents, these characteristics must be considered when determining how well a school is likely to perform.
>
> EQA measures the cumulative effect of all that has happened to students, both in and out of school, to the time they were assessed. Students in grades 5, 8 and 11 participated in this program.
>
> The EQA results, along with other data, are used to help establish district needs from which goals are established to implement new and improved programs that further upgrade the educational programs at Upper Penn.

Sample 3

> Recently, the Upper Penn School Board received a report of the state assessment program. Dr. Don Smith, Assistant Superintendent for Curricu-

lum and Instruction, reviewed the results. Grades 5, 8 and 11 were tested last spring as part of a statewide testing program aimed at measuring local effort in achievement of state goals.

Sample 4

How can Pennsylvania's Department of Education measure the success of each school's efforts to educate the children in its care? Standardized test scores are helpful in measuring academic success in reading and math, but how about some of the more subtle benefits we hope children are receiving? How do you test a child's interest in school and learning or the development of citizenship and societal responsibility? How do you measure a child's understanding and appreciation of the arts, natural and social sciences and the humanities? How can you assess a child's creative activities?

Since 1963, state educators have been working to develop a means of evaluating the adequacy and efficiency of the educational programs offered by the public schools of the Commonwealth. First it was necessary to determine what, actually, our school was attempting to teach.

Education is more than reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. A person's education is the sum total of everything he or she has ever learned about anything from anybody. Learning to get along with other people is as important as learning to spell. Discovering and appreciating one's own talents are every bit as essential as discovering scientific truths.

Sample 5

During the spring of 1983, the Upper Penn Schools participated in the Educational Quality Assessment Program administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Students in grades 5, 8 and 11 participated in the assessment program.

Sample 6

The purpose of EQA is to provide school administrators and directors with information which will assist them in the decision-making process. They do not typically have this information available to them. EQA provides information so that schools are able to compare their performance on a percentile basis statewide and also on a resource basis using a predictive process. In addition to the assessment service, EQA has developed procedures to assist schools to determine their strengths and weaknesses and identify priorities for improvement. Resources have been identified in each goal area to aid schools in their improvement efforts.

Sample 7

Skills in reading comprehension and mathematics are the two areas in which Upper Penn's elementary students excel, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Reports were delivered recently by a PDE staff member who sat down with the administrative team to report the findings of the school assessment program conducted last Spring in the Upper Penn schools as part of the state's Educational Quality Assessment program.

Last March Upper Penn's 5th, 8th and 11th grade students completed comprehensive questionnaires designed to measure the students', and hence the school's, status on the Goals of Quality Education. These goals endorse the philosophy that the school's purpose goes beyond teaching the 3 R's, that the school plays a part in developing a youngster's attitude toward self, toward others, toward school and learning and toward society. Furthermore, the school has a responsibility to develop in each student desirable health and safety practices, an appreciation and knowledge of the cultural contributions of others, career awareness and a knowledge of law and government and to promote creative activities.

Although the results for the elementary schools are based upon replies of 5th graders, they are used to represent the school, not what 5th grade teachers alone have contributed to their development. After all, these pupils have been in school for five or more years, so it is fairer to use the results as an assessment of the school. The program is not designed to measure teacher effectiveness -- what many have called accountability. The results are aggregated for all the 5th graders and identification of individual teachers is not permitted by the state plan.

All replies by students and teachers, who also complete a questionnaire, are anonymous. Students never place their names on the answer sheets. Why? There are at least three reasons:

1. Possibly foremost is the desire to avoid placing "labels" on students -- such things as Jan has low self-esteem -- and having such "tags" stick on them forever.

2. Since many questions deal with attitudes, some about teachers and the school, students must feel free to answer truthfully without pressure to respond in a socially desirable fashion out of some fear that their teachers will be reading their answers.

3. Since the purpose of the program is to assess the school, it is not necessary to know who said what -- only what they said and can do.

Typically, the PDE assessment specialist pointed out that the individual elementary schools have differing results. Upper Penn is no exception to that rule. The length and complexity of the school reports combined with their individual differences make generalizations about the district very difficult. The most meaningful analysis comes when the administrators, teachers, parents and students can discuss the results for their school.

THE AREAS MEASURED

A box with the list of the areas measured could be used. Perhaps a list with a short note on the type of items would better suit your needs. Or, a detailed statement of the rationales may be what you are seeking. A sample of each follows.

Sample 1

Cognitive (knowledge) areas

Reading
Writing Skills
Mathematics
Knowledge of Law/Government
Health Knowledge – Grade 5
Career Awareness
Knowledge of Human Accomplishments
Information Usage

Non-Cognitive (attitudinal) areas

Self-Esteem
Understanding Others
Interest in School and Learning
Societal Responsibility
Health and Safety Practices – Grades 8 & 11
Creative Activities
Appreciating Human Accomplishments

Sample 2

SUMMARY OF TEST AREAS

Self-Esteem

Students are asked to relate their feelings of success and feelings of acceptance primarily in the school setting.

Understanding Others

Students are asked to respond to approaches and interactions with persons of differing skin color, religious beliefs, physical characteristics, socio-economic status or cultural tradition.

Communication Skills:

Reading Comprehension

Literal comprehension - recognition of details or the main ideas explicitly stated. Word meaning - recognition of the appropriate meaning of a word in a given context. Inferential comprehension - response to items which require taking the meaning of a passage beyond explicit ideas.

Writing Skills

A. Mechanics and usage - application of rules and conventions necessary for effective writing communication.

B. Sentence sense - recognition of clear, concise and effective sentences.

C. Paragraph sense - recognition of coherence, unity and transition in the organization and development of paragraphs and larger units.

D. Style, tone and flavor - recognition of effective and appropriate language for a given purpose, audience or situation.

Mathematics

Items measure mathematical concepts, computation and/or problem-solving.

Interest in School and Learning

Students are to display their feelings on the climate and learning atmosphere in the school, the educational experiences the school provides, the quality of the personal interactions it fosters between student and educator, and the students' attitudes toward learning.

Societal Responsibility
(Citizenship)

Students are asked if they will assume responsibility for their actions and the actions of groups to which they belong, work cooperatively, demonstrate integrity when dealing with others, and take the initiative and assume leadership, as well as support group efforts as followers.

Knowledge of Law/Government
(Citizenship)

Three major areas of knowledge were identified as essential to good citizenship. They are broadly described as knowledge of government, knowledge of law and knowledge of interdependence of people.

Health and Safety Practices
(M.S./H.S. Only)

Students are to demonstrate that they have acquired habits and attitudes which increase the probability of remaining healthy, safe and fit throughout life.

Knowledge of Health/Safety
(Elem. Only)

Students are to demonstrate knowledge of how to take care of themselves and how to keep physically fit, what the requirements are for physical and mental health and what practices, harmful to health, should be avoided.

Creative Activities
(Arts and Humanities and Science and Technology Items)

Students are asked to indicate frequency of participation in five areas: visual arts, performing arts, writing, science and social and practical studies.

Career Awareness
(Work)

The students are queried on their awareness of duties, training, abilities and educational requirements of various occupations, an understanding of the labor market conditions, and skills in gathering such data, such as knowledge of occupational clusters and publications.

Appreciating Human Accomplishments
(Arts and Humanities and Science and Technology Items)

Student openness is displayed by a willingness to engage in listening, watching or reading activities relating to significant accomplishments. In addition, the student reaching the higher levels of openness will display willingness to learn about accomplishments and what is entailed in producing them.

Knowledge of Human Accomplishments
(Arts and Humanities and Science and Technology Items)

Students are asked to demonstrate a recognition of persons, theories or ideas, works, inventions or phenomena. Students are expected to be able to recognize the names of prominent persons and concepts to which they should have been exposed within the school setting.

Information Usage
(Analytical Thinking)

Students are asked to show that they are able to examine problems in a logical way, to identify them properly, to seek whatever information is needed to establish facts, to be aware of the consequences of decisions,

and to have the ability to choose courses of action which are most congruent with their own values and desires.

Sample 3

SELF-ESTEEM

Students, regardless of their level and pattern of particular talents, should experience a school setting that will strengthen, not damage, their self-esteem. The school should help students at all levels of talent achieve feelings of success and of acceptance that are important in relating appropriately to others and in becoming a successful member of society.

Self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness. It is a subject experience which the individual conveys to others verbally or by other behavior. Most theories acknowledge that our self-image and feelings of worthiness are determined largely by how well we can live up to our own aspirations and meet expectations of others.

Aspirations become closely associated with personal goal-setting behavior originating in our internalized system of values. Expectations are external in nature and are related to goals set collectively by society or by significant individuals in our lives. Assessment in this area is based on several components believed to be related to the development of positive self-esteem in the school context.

The first is a feeling of acceptance. The feeling of self-worth and acceptance by teachers and classmates is an important ingredient to the development of a positive self-esteem. Those lacking a feeling of acceptance often have difficulty in interpersonal relations and tend to believe that others have little confidence in, or low regard for, them.

Secondly, feelings of self-determination and success in school work, class recitation and teacher relationships help to mold feelings of self-confidence -- so important to adequate coping in daily life. Those who lack feelings of success and confidence are often characterized as cautious, submissive individuals who feel inadequate, are fearful and expect to be unsuccessful in dealing with new situations.

UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

Students should acquire attitudes which will facilitate easy interaction with all people regardless of skin color, religious beliefs, physical characteristics, socioeconomic status or cultural tradition. Schools, although not solely responsible for the development of these attitudes, should be aware of the degree of tolerance exercised by their students and should promote positive interpersonal relations in the school setting.

Each individual daily experiences a variety of social interactions. One way of categorizing these types of interactions is into four types of social interactions that exist: (1) Friendship, (2) Social Distance, (3) Respect, and (4) Superordination.

An assumption made in assessing this goal is that tolerance toward differing others is to a degree situational. The instrument employed contains items to measure tolerance in the four types of situations described above.

Thus, it was assumed, for example, that whereas an individual might have no difficulty accepting someone different from himself or herself in situations which could be categorized as social distance (e.g., sitting beside the person in class), the same individual might not want to serve on a committee headed by this person (superordination).

Also, an individual might not be willing to spend a great deal of time interacting socially with someone different from himself or herself (friendship), but might have little reluctance in asking the person's opinions about an important issue (respect).

COMMUNICATION SKILLS - READING COMPREHENSION

The goal of all reading is the comprehension of meaning. Comprehension involves the integration of a complex set of behaviors which begins with the association of a sound with a given symbol and moves through word, sentence and paragraph meaning of higher level passage-interpretation skills. Students should master such fundamental skills as word attack, phonetic analysis and structural analysis at their level of sophistication, but a general reading assessment should focus on the total reading process by means of some measure of reading comprehension.

Measuring literal and inferential comprehension tasks indirectly assesses the fundamental reading skills and is perhaps the best global measure of reading achievement in a survey form with limited space. Comprehension tasks at various difficulty levels can be delineated and the items in the scales at each grade level measure some of them:

Level	Comprehension Tasks
Literal: Comprehension of details, relationships and major ideas which are explicitly stated in a passage	Identifying main idea Identifying supporting details Identifying cause and effect
Inferential: Comprehension of details, relationships and major ideas which are implied but not explicitly stated in a passage	Inferring main idea Using supporting details Inferring cause and effect Predicting outcomes Drawing conclusions Determining author's point of view Making judgments Determining the (appropriate) meaning of a (multiple-meaning) word/contextual analysis

COMMUNICATION SKILLS - WRITING SKILLS

Communication skills include the ability to express ideas through writing. To measure writing skills there are two appropriate procedures: an essay test which requires the student to write several short essays, letters, and reports -- or an objective test which requires the student to choose the best way of expressing something. While the essay test engages the student in actual writing, it is very time consuming and costly to administer and score.

The objective test for writing skills used in this program measures some of the skills involved in writing standard edited English. The skills include punctuation, capitalization and usage. Also included are standard forms of organization and development of sentences and paragraphs, and elements of style, tone and flavor.

With carefully designed items assessing this broad range of skills, this type of measurement is highly correlated with tests of actual writing. Research has shown that students who do well on such a test tend also to be competent writers.

Four categories of skills are assessed:

1. Mechanics and usage - recognizing the application of conventions

2. Sentence sense - recognizing clear, concise and effective sentences

3. Paragraph sense - recognizing coherence, unity and transition in the organization and development of paragraphs and larger units

4. Style, tone and flavor - recognizing effective and appropriate language for a given purpose, audience or situation

INTEREST IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING

The school represents perhaps the most powerful single force in determining a person's overall attitude toward learning. The climate and learning atmosphere in the school, the educational experiences the school provides and the quality of the personal interactions it fosters between student and educator all shape the students' life-long attitudes toward learning.

The school experience should be such that students find the learning activities associated with it enjoyable and rewarding to the point that they are motivated to do well and to continue learning on their own initiative beyond the requirements of formal education. Everything possible should be done to ensure that the attitude of the teacher, the atmosphere of the school and the school's physical condition contribute toward this end so that the individual - both as a child and later as an adult - will hold education high among his or her values.

The schools that pupils attend influence both their present attitudes toward learning and their attitudes toward learning throughout their

lives. Both subject matter being learned in school and the environment in which this learning takes place are important factors in forming lasting impressions about learning. Thus, the instrument used to measure this goal includes items concerned with attitudes toward the school environment, as well as items concerned with attitudes toward learning.

SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

Teachers, administrators, curriculum developers, parents and other concerned citizens should encourage students to assume responsibility for their actions and the actions of groups to which they belong. Opportunities should be provided for students to work cooperatively and demonstrate integrity when dealing with others. Students should be given the chance to take the initiative and assume leadership as well as support group efforts as followers.

A person's behavior may change under differing sets of motivating conditions. A behavior seen as unacceptable according to tradition or law may be seen as acceptable to an individual under a certain set of conditions.

When behaviors which infringe on the rights and property of others, which ignore the representative government which has established the laws, and which abandon one's personal development are undertaken to points exceeding the norm and points beyond the criterion set by society, the school should be aware of the situation before a pattern of continually relaxing motivators sets in.

To assess societal responsibility, varying situations are presented with conditions of reward and punishment. Students indicate whether they are willing to continue with positive behaviors under each of the conditions.

KNOWLEDGE OF LAW/GOVERNMENT

It must be recognized that a major prerequisite to developing habits and attitudes must be the acquiring of basic knowledge. Obviously, students who have gained knowledge about our system of government will not automatically become responsible citizens. However, the development of responsible citizenship behaviors will be impaired if certain basic knowledges are not obtained. For example, it would be expected that students who do not understand what voting is all about would not exercise this right when out of school. Students who do understand the voting process may or may not vote, but at least their decision will not be based upon ignorance.

HEALTH

In their own interest, as well as the interest of society at large, students should know how to take care of themselves and how to keep physically fit. They should know what the requirements are for physical and mental health and what practices harmful to health should be avoided.

After gaining this knowledge, they should acquire habits which increase the probability of remaining healthy and fit throughout life. In cases where the home has been deficient in encouraging the child to practice some health habits, the school has an obligation to be aware of the situation and to see that opportunities to remedy the deficiency are provided.

Knowledge of Health/Safety - Grade 5

To develop sound health-promoting behavior, an individual must acquire a basic understanding of how the body develops and functions. Understanding disease processes, their development and prevention, as well as principles related to dental care, nutrition, personal hygiene, physical fitness, safety, drug use and general care of the body, are all instrumental in forming behavior patterns supportive of good health.

Assessment of this goal at the elementary grade level concentrates on the knowledge base believed to be representative of the general health domain.

Health and Safety Practices - Grades 8 and 11

Understanding how diseases and their prevention, dental care, personal hygiene, physical exercise, safety and drug use relate to the structure and function of the human body is an important first step in each individual's willingness to consistently exhibit habits which are conducive to the maintenance of personal health and well-being.

Therefore, assessment in this goal area attempts to get at students' willingness to display proper health behaviors in a variety of situations.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

The notion of creativity has been variously defined. Here it encompasses worthwhile activities that a student initiates and pursues on his/her own -- activities having an outcome that is perceived by the student and by others as a contribution to some part of his/her world. Such activities can be included in a wide variety of fields, not only the sciences and the arts, but also the organization of human affairs and the development and exercise of salable skills in the production of any of a host of practical things that enrich our way of living.

It is not to be expected that the creative behavior of students will, except in very rare cases, lead to wholly original productions. What is expected is that many students, if given the chance, will become involved in exploring ideas and ways of doing things that are new and existing within their own world. The school should make possible this kind of rewarding experience for all students, and should judge its success by its ability to evoke in students a flexible and creative approach to human affairs.

To measure the two dimensions of the goal, i.e., the frequency of involvement in creative activities and the interest in future creative

activity, a dual response set was placed on a creative activities checklist.

The first dimension is based on student experiences during the past three years to determine if the opportuntiies have been available and if the student has taken advantage of them. These opportunities are not limited to those provided within the school because: (1) it is not possible to isolate community and school functions, (2) the school often promotes and supports community activities, and (3) the amount of community opportunity is often the direct result of the educational background of that community.

The second dimension is based on the student's expressed interest in future participation in creative activities.

CAREER AWARENESS

In order to understand the opportunities open to him or her in the future, the student must have an awareness of duties, training, abilities and educational requirements of various occupations -- along with an understanding of the labor market conditions. Also, skills in gathering such data, such as knowledge of occupational clusters and publications, is necessary for continuing education in this area.

Schools should provide students with guidance to seek out the kind of education and training which will lead them to careers that are best suited to their talents and interests.

Vocational development, for purposes of assessment, is a series of processes involving both the acquisition of knowledge about different kinds of work and the forming of attitudes which will enhance one's chances of succeeding in the work-a-day world.

In the initial stages of vocational maturity students become aware of different kinds of work and workers. This is followed by a growing understanding of the relatedness of educational and occupational opportunities. The more vocationally mature students will actively seek information, accept personal responsibility for career decision and finally base their career choices upon a realistic appraisal of their interests, achievements and attitudes.

It is assumed that the awareness of jobs and job opportunities, measured at all grades, will lead to the development of vocational maturity.

APPRECIATING HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Appreciation of an area of human accomplishment can be expressed in a variety of ways, ranging from that of believing the area to have some minimal value to society, to that of committing a great deal of one's own time and energy to the area. Although it would seem most desirable to define "appreciation" for this goal as depth of commitment to an area, this would present a number of problems. For example, other responsibilities of students outside of school and the geographical location of

their homes could affect greatly the opportunities available to them to appreciate accomplishments.

The instrument being used to measure the goal area, however, would be expected to be highly indicative of present or future commitment to areas of accomplishment. The instrument assesses attitudinal openness to human accomplishments. Items contained in it reflect willingness to receive accomplishments, including willingness to do such things as listen to, watch, look at, read or go to significant accomplishments. In addition, items are employed measuring a somewhat higher level of openness, reflecting willingness to learn about accomplishments and what is entailed in producing them.

KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A necessary prerequisite to appreciation is the recognition of persons, theories or ideas, works, inventions or phenomena. Students are expected to be able to recognize the names of prominent persons and concepts to which they would have been exposed within the school setting.

It is anticipated that an increased knowledge of the accomplishments of others will enhance the appreciation of their importance in society.

Although some students may have a broad background in one area of human accomplishment -- such as art, music, science, drama or government -- it is deemed necessary for individuals to have been exposed to a large number of areas of human accomplishment.

To measure the lowest level of knowledge of these accomplishments, students are asked to simply categorize the name, work, theory, idea, invention, or phenomena into a general classification indicating that they have had at least a brief exposure. This general awareness is considered a minimal prerequisite for appreciation.

INFORMATION USAGE

In today's world, one skill which is highly important is decision-making ability (analytical thinking). Each time a person comes to a choice between two or more courses of action, he/she is confronted by a problem that must be solved. As the world becomes increasingly complex, individuals are faced with an accelerating number of decisions. Voting for a candidate merely because he or she is a member of a particular political party, eating a certain brand of food because a well-known sports figure endorses it, choosing a career without exploring the opportunities available in it are all examples of poor decision-making. Students must be taught to examine problems in a logical way, to identify them properly, to seek whatever information is needed to establish facts, to be aware of the consequences of decisions and to have the ability to choose courses of action which are most congruent with their own values and desires. Assessment in this area, therefore, focuses upon processes involved in logical decision-making.

THE HISTORY OF THE EQA PROGRAM

Although history of EQA program is not a mandatory part of an EQA release, it is offered as an option which might be included. It would be a particular concern when writing for an audience which may question the legal background of the program or may be seeking evidence that the program is built on a firm foundation.

Sample 1

EQA in Pennsylvania had its beginning in Act 299 of the General Assembly which was passed into law in August, 1963. Specifically, Section 290.1 of that Act directed the State Board of Education to provide for an evaluation of school districts which would provide the school directors and administrators with relevant comparative data and provide a uniform measurement for each school district.

The State Board of Education began by establishing ten major objectives a "quality education" should do for the learner. These became known as the Ten Goals of Quality Education. (In 1979 these were revised and expanded to a set of twelve goals.) In 1967, the Pennsylvania Department of Education Educational Quality Assessment program staff began the task of developing a workable plan to evaluate the educational programs being conducted in the school districts throughout the Commonwealth.

The assessment service was offered to school districts on a voluntary basis for elementary and high schools from 1970 through 1972. In November 1973, a State Board of Education resolution stated that in the spring of 1974, 1975 and 1976 one-third of the schools in the state will participate so that by fall of 1976 almost all of the 505 school districts in the state had assessment reports for its schools. These reports were based on three grade levels - Grades 5, 8 and 11. After two years of voluntary participation, school district participation in EQA is now required at least once every five years. In 1983, 239 school districts participated.

Sample 2

The Educational Quality Assessment is an evaluation procedure resulting from a 1963 legislative mandate (Act 299) to aid local administrators and school directors in providing a stronger educational program for their students.

Sample 3

Act 299, the School District Reorganization Act of 1963, led to the establishment of the Educational Quality Assessment (EQA) program. Specifically, Section 290.1 directed the State Board of Education to provide for an evaluation of school districts which would provide the school directors and administrators with relevant comparative data and provide a uniform measurement for each school district. Districts are required to

participate at least once in every five years. However, most districts participate more frequently than required.

Sample 4

The Educational Quality Assessment (EQA) program has been in operation for over fifteen years. After several years of development and pilot testing of the measurement devices, the EQA program became operational in the 1969-70 school year to districts on a voluntary basis. It continued to be voluntary for the following three school years. All school districts were required to participate in one of the school years 1973-74, 1974-75, and 1975-76. In 1976-77, the program was voluntary while the measurement instruments were refined and revised. In 1977-78, the new instrument package was used with 113 volunteer districts. In the successive school years, the program has expanded. A school district may now participate every school year or as little as once every five years. In 1982-83, over 240 local school districts participated in the EQA program with students in grades 5, 8, and 11 completing the questionnaire.

THE COLLECTION OF DATA

Again, this is not a mandatory element of an EQA release. It would be important for an audience which is questioning how all this information could be collected statewide. It could be a few short paragraphs like those listed below or a longer, more detailed description.

Sample 1

The questionnaires, or tests, are administered in a regular school setting, by teachers, following prescribed directions. The assessment normally requires approximately two hours for completion.

The answer sheets are sent to a commercial firm to be scored electronically. The results then come back to the local district from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Sample 2

In August, the Division of Educational Quality Assessment notifies school districts of the upcoming assessment the following March. When returning the initial forms, the district superintendent nominates a school representative for each of the three grade levels -- 5th, 8th and 11th. As a contact person between that district and EQA, each representative attends a regional workshop to learn about EQA duties, responsibilities and background. They also examine sample school reports to learn what they can expect in return for their efforts.

District representatives administer teacher questionnaires to gain additional information about the school from the teacher's perspective as well as information about the teachers. Teachers answer anonymously, placing only the district name and school name on the questionnaire. Classroom teachers spending more than 50 percent of their time in classroom instruction fill out the questionnaires.

Parents of the students to be tested are told about the EQA testing and have an opportunity to review the questionnaires. Parents may exclude their children from being tested by notifying their school principal in writing.

Although school districts have an option to use large group sessions, many use the classrooms as test sites and the teachers as monitors. Answering the questionnaires takes two to 2½ hours of student time. Most districts give the questionnaire in two sittings on two consecutive days for 5th graders and on one day for 8th and 11th graders. Though the Examiner's Handbook lists time ranges that might be expected for each section, students are given ample time to finish each section.

To assure confidentiality and anonymity of responses, the students do not put their names on the answer sheets. The students are told that they can skip any item they feel is too personal.

Parents' occupational and educational information for grade 5 students is obtained from school records or parent survey forms. Parents' occupational and educational information for 8th and 11th graders is provided by the students.

Envelopes containing completed teacher questionnaires and completed student answer sheets are mailed for scanning, scoring and compilation by a commercial firm.

Sample 3

There is often skepticism regarding the credibility of EQA data. Many reasons are given for the skepticism, and in the case of EQA it is that students "fool around", don't read the items, or don't take the test seriously. While each of these reasons may be true to some degree, the results from several years of testing indicate that the degree is very small.

If students are just "fooling around" and are not reading the items, responses would be random and there would be no discernable pattern. An examination of item responses for the past four years reveals that this is not the case. In each year's assessment more than 9,000 students responded to each of the items. The evidence is clear that students answer the items in a consistent manner.

There is the very important concern that the instruments measure what they claim to measure. Or, some people ask, "Are they valid?" In a special manual, the EQA staff has documented their validity studies. In constructing the instruments, the EQA staff is advised by committees composed of people identified as experts in their field. These people help assure that the instruments measure content that most students should have encountered by that grade level.

NARRATIVE OF RESULTS

A difficult section to write, this is the meat of the release unless charts and graphs are used. This section, of course, must be tailor-made for your district. The following are examples of the results delineated by other districts.

Sample 1

District students scored within or above the predicted range in basic skills. Strengths in the fifth grade class were in the areas of reading, writing, health, understanding others and societal responsibility. The areas of lesser strength were self-esteem and interest in school and learning.

Strengths in the eighth grade were in the areas of reading, writing, math, societal responsibility, understanding others and appreciating human accomplishments. The areas of lesser strength were self-esteem and interest in school and learning.

Strengths in the eleventh grade were in the areas of reading, writing, math, societal responsibility and health. The areas of lesser strength were knowledge of human accomplishments and interest in school and learning.

Sample 2

John M. Doe, superintendent said, "The results tend to indicate that students in the Upper Penn School District are achieving knowledge and skills and developing attitudes consistent with predictions of the Pennsylvania Department of Education as measured by the Educational Quality Assessment inventory.

"However, in all but a few areas tested, the predicted results fall below the average scores for schools throughout Pennsylvania."

The inventory provides several kinds of information about the student body in each building participating. No information is reported for individual students. Results for each student body indicate its relative standing across the state and relative to groups similar in home and school environments.

In comparison to student bodies throughout Pennsylvania, all types of schools and communities included, the Upper Penn students, as groups of 5th, 8th and 11th graders, generally fell below the middle, but isolated scores may be very high or very low.

Comparisons of the results of Upper Penn student bodies to those schools in communities like those in the local district show some areas of strength and others where extra effort is needed. Reading, writing and mathematics are receiving special attention because the student bodies scored low, although in most cases within the predicted range.

The three elementary schools' fifth grade students earned scores at about the median for five areas. Generally, these students feel pretty good about themselves in relation to school and are very interested in school and in learning. They indicate responsible feelings toward society and show appreciation for the outstanding accomplishments of others. In addition to the need for more work in the three R's, more emphasis needs to be placed on learning about law and government and about the many types of occupations and careers existing today.

The 8th graders scored higher than predicted in reading, law and government, recognizing famous people and ideas, and in using information to make decisions. Only the scores in law and government were above the middle score for the state, however. Those students indicated less involvement in creative activities than what was predicted for them.

Although the 11th graders as a group showed a higher interest in school and learning than was predicted and did better than predicted in law and government, they had no score above the median score for 11th graders across the state.

Sample 3

Included in the report for each elementary school are six kinds of information.

1. A comparison of the school scores to all other elementary schools in the state.
2. An expected score range for each area measured based upon an analysis of the resources that particular elementary has at its disposal.
3. The school's relative standing on each of the resources -- teachers, students, money, community -- used to calculate the expected score range.
4. The number of pupils answering 1/3 or 1/2 or 2/3 of the items correctly or positively.
5. Item data, i.e., precentage of students choosing each answer option.
6. Percentage of students having a designated score for each area measured.

The results for Upper Penn elementary schools show, overall, reading comprehension scores to be high. For instance, two of the schools scored in the top 15 percent of the schools in the state. Furthermore, these scores were above the expected scores calculated for those schools. That means that even taking into account the more favorable circumstances under which these schools are operating, they still are scoring higher than schools with similar advantages.

The elementary schools all scored in the top third of the state in mathematics. In most other areas, there is a great diversity of scores among the elementary schools. However, in all five elementary schools, the writing skills scores are below the mathematics scores. Moreover, none exceeds its expected score or is in the top half of the state for writing skills.

Upper Penn Superintendent of Schools John J. Doe noted that other recent achievement test information has shown a similar pattern of mathematics scores not matching writing skills scores. According to Dr. Doe, "This additional confirmation has resulted in the creation of a task force of principals and teachers from each school meeting to organize a writing mechanics and expression program. They are looking at textbooks, curriculum and teaching methods and will present their recommendations to me by December 1."

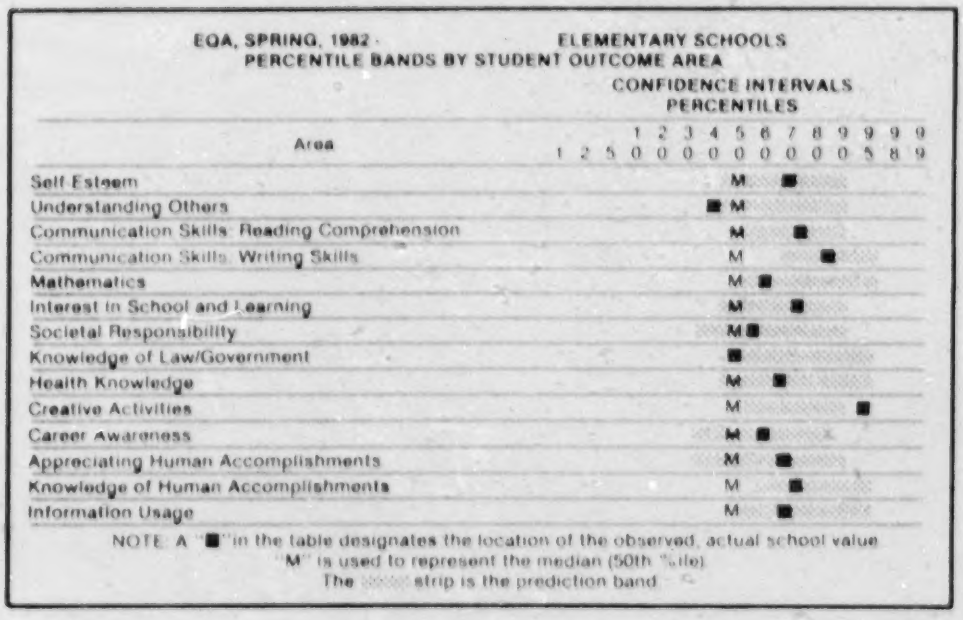
CHARTS AND GRAPHS OF RESULTS

Use of charts and graphs is optional. However, they are highly recommended over narrative explanations which are both difficult to write and difficult to read. The following are examples of approaches used by several districts. They are dependent on the graphics facilities available to you. They should always be accompanied with a brief explanation of how they are read.

Sample 1

Rather than trying to pinpoint one specific place where schools of similar resources scored, the charts identify a range of scores within which a grade level might be expected to score. This range might be thought of as a "prediction band" or a "band of expectation"; that is, where one would predict, or expect, that grade level to score given its district's standing on the variables which identify the school system's resources.

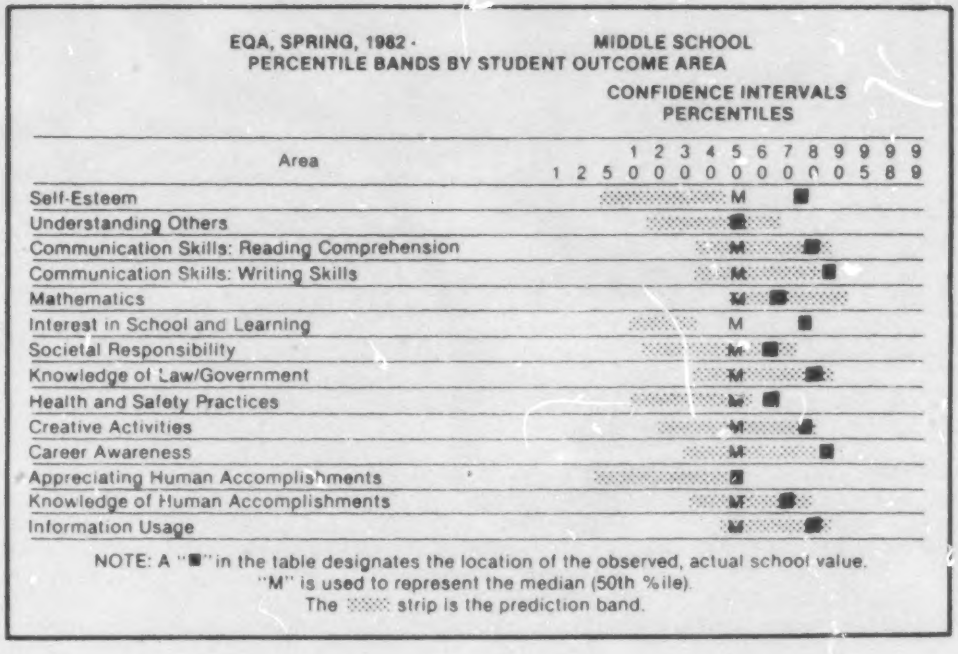
EQA, SPRING, 1982 · ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
PERCENTILE BANDS BY STUDENT OUTCOME AREA



NOTE: A "■" in the table designates the location of the observed, actual school value
"M" is used to represent the median (50th %ile)
The ▒▒▒ strip is the prediction band

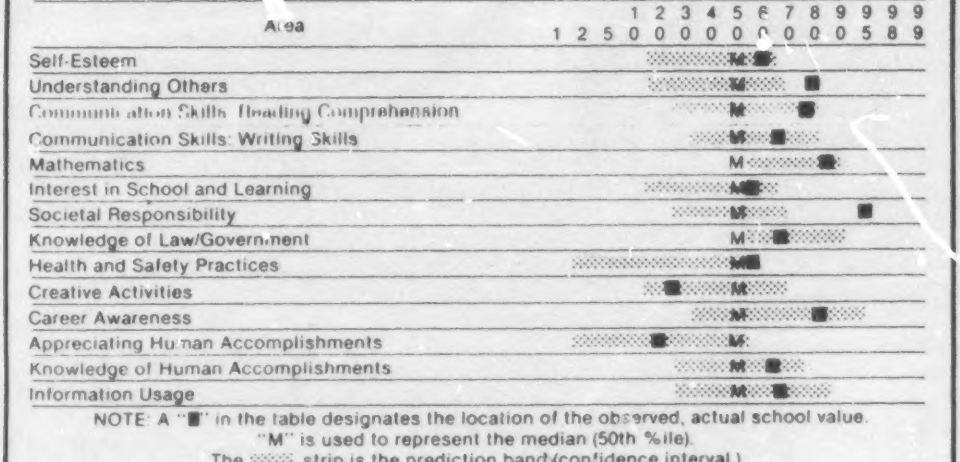
Sample 1 (Continued)

EQA, SPRING, 1982 - MIDDLE SCHOOL
PERCENTILE BANDS BY STUDENT OUTCOME AREA



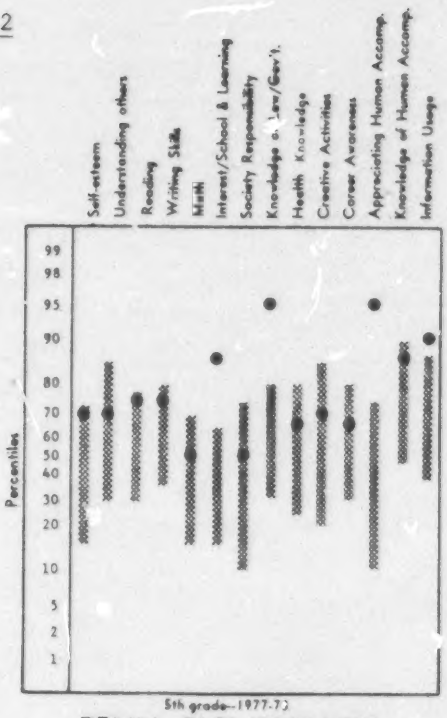
NOTE: A "■" in the table designates the location of the observed, actual school value.
"M" is used to represent the median (50th %ile).
The ▒▒ strip is the prediction band.

EQA, SPRING, 1982 - HIGH SCHOOL - GRADE 11
PERCENTILE BANDS BY STUDENT OUTCOME AREA

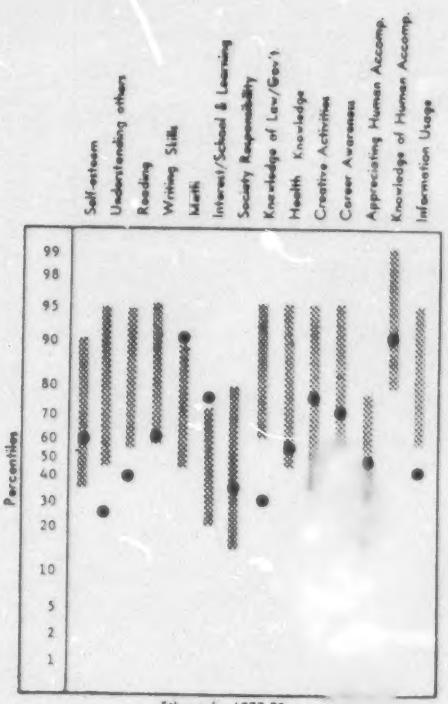


NOTE: A "■" in the table designates the location of the observed, actual school value.
"M" is used to represent the median (50th %ile).
The ▒▒ strip is the prediction band (confidence interval.)

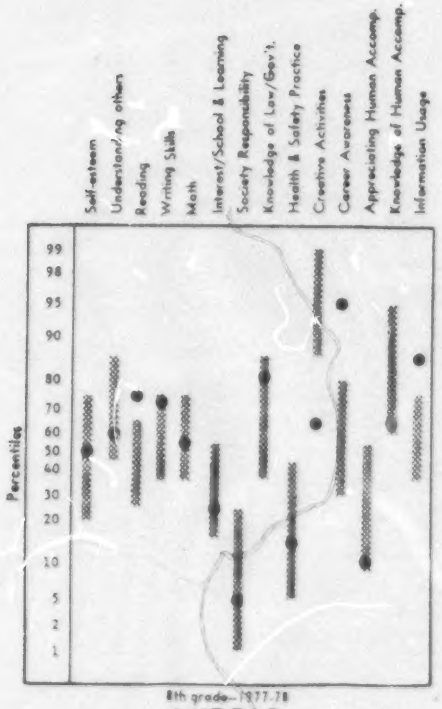
Sample 2



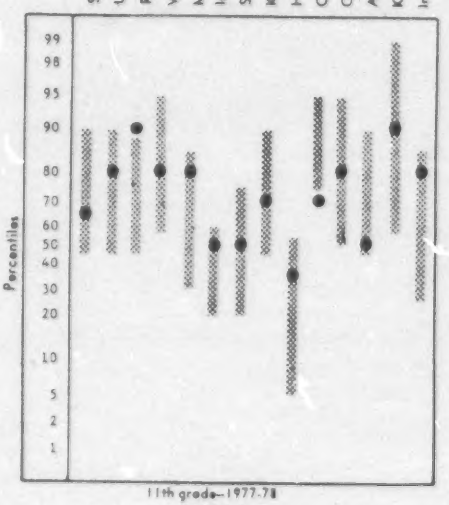
PENN ELEMENTARY



WOOD ELEMENTARY



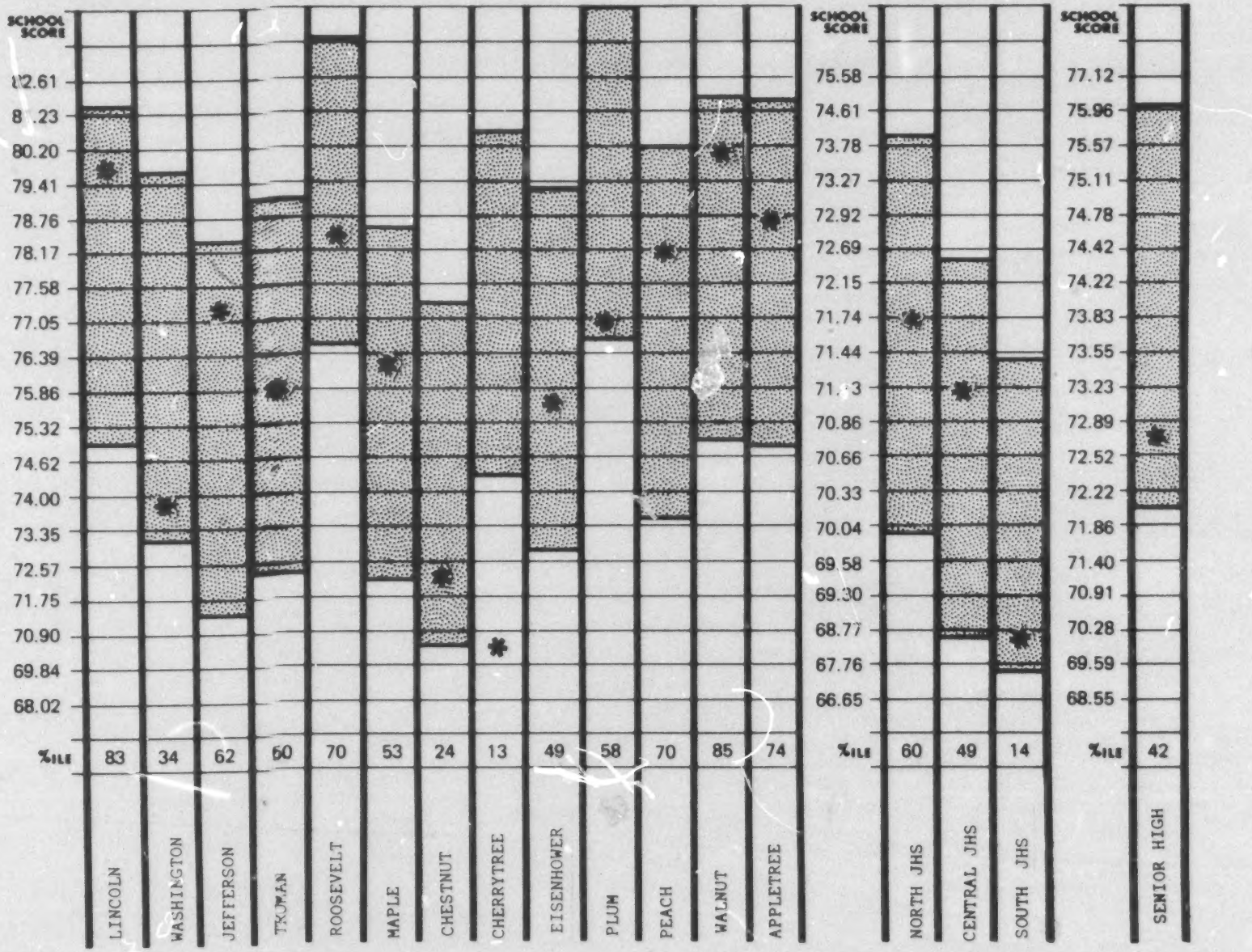
MIDDLE



HIGH

SELF ESTEEM

(Editor's note: Only the Self-Esteem chart is reproduced here. A similar chart for all the areas was included in the original packet prepared by the school district concerned.)



NOTE: The row of "X"s shows where District students were expected to score. An "A" in the table shows the location of the actual District Score.

Grade Five	PERCENTILES												
	1	2	5	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	95	98	99
AREA															
SELF ESTEEM						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXAXXXXXX									
UNDERSTANDING OTHERS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXAXX									
COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS: READING						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXAXX									
COMMUNICATION SKILLS: WRITING SKILLS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXA									
MATHEMATICS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXAXXX									
INTEREST IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING						M									
						XXXXXAXXXXXXXXX									
SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY						M									
						XXXXXAXXXXXXXXX									
KNOWLEDGE OF LAW/GOVERNMENT						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXXX					A				
HEALTH KNOWLEDGE						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXX					A				
CREATIVE ACTIVITIES						M									
						XXXXXAXXXXXXXXXXX									
CAREER AWARENESS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXX					A				
APPRECIATING HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS						M									
						XXXAXXXXXXXXXXXX									
KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXA									
INFORMATION USAGE						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXA									

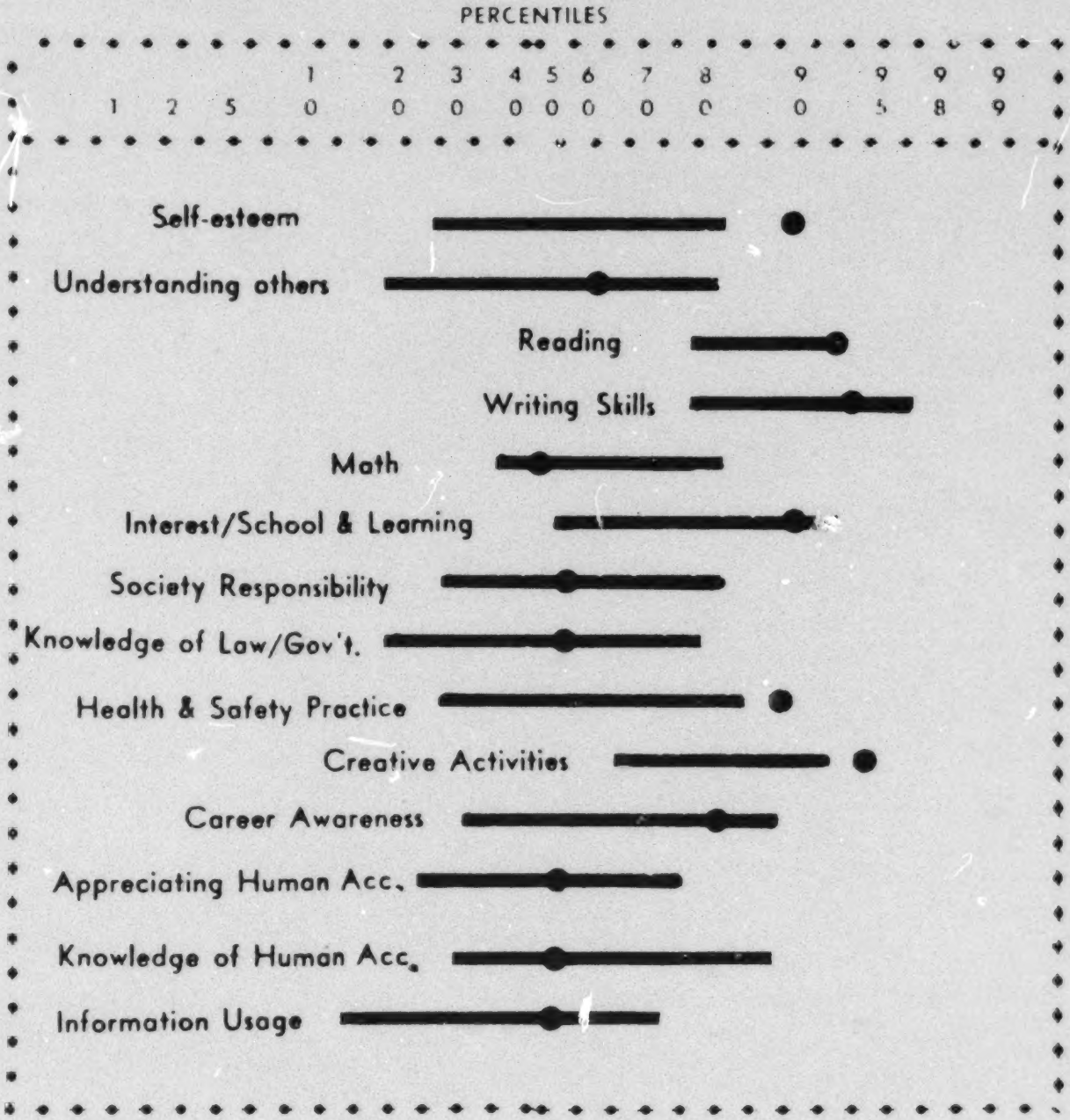
Grade Eight	PERCENTILES												
	1	2	5	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	95	98	99
AREA															
SELF ESTEEM						M									
						XAXXXXXXXXX									
UNDERSTANDING OTHERS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX					A				
COMMUNICATION SKILLS: READING						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXA									
COMMUNICATION SKILLS: WRITING SKILLS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXA									
MATHEMATICS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXAXXX									
INTEREST IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING						M									
						XXXXAXXXXXXX									
SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY						M									
						XXXXXXXXAXXXX									
KNOWLEDGE OF LAW/GOVERNMENT						M									
						XXXXXXXAXXXXXX									
HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES						M									
						XXXXXXAXXXXXXXXXX									
CREATIVE ACTIVITIES						M									
					A	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX									
CAREER AWARENESS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXXXA									
APPRECIATING HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS						M									
	A					XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX									
KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXA									
INFORMATION USAGE						M									
						XXXAXXXXXXXX									

Grade Eleven	PERCENTILES												
	1	2	5	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	95	98	99
AREA															
SELF ESTEEM						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXXA									
UNDERSTANDING OTHERS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXXX					A				
COMMUNICATION SKILLS: READING						M									
						XXXXXXXXAXXXXX									
COMMUNICATION SKILLS: WRITING SKILLS						M									
						XXXXXXAXXX									
MATHEMATICS						M									
						XXXAXXXXXXXXX									
INTEREST IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING						M									
						XXXXXXXAXXX									
SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXAX									
KNOWLEDGE OF LAW/GOVERNMENT						M									
						XXXXXXXAXXXXXXX									
HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX					A				
CREATIVE ACTIVITIES						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXXXAXXXXX									
CAREER AWARENESS						M									
						XAXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX									
APPRECIATING HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXA									
KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS						M									
						XXXXXXXXXXAXXXX									
INFORMATION USAGE						M									
					A	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX									

Schools with similar conditions in all of these variables are grouped, and a prediction band (which is represented by the row of "X's" in the charts) is developed for each school. The information provided in the charts is for the entire District. In these charts, the bands of "X's" represent the predicted score range for each goal. The "M" represents the median or mid-point of schools tested, and the "A" reflects the actual score of the individual school, or, in this case, the District. If the letter "A" appears below the band of "X's" the District did not score within the predicted range that it should have reached given the conditions that exist in the District. If the letter "A" is within the row of "X's", the District scored within its predicted band. If the "A" is above the band, the District exceeded its expectations. The numbers across the top of each chart, marked percentiles, can be interpreted as follows. If the "A", the District's actual score, appears below the 70th percentile, the District did as well or better than 70% of the Districts which took part in the testing this year. For each individual district these prediction bands of "X's" might move up or down the scale of percentiles depending on the kinds of resources and attitudes which exist in the District.

Sample 5

SENIOR HIGH — Grade 11



Sample 6

Area	PERCENTILES		
	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Self-Esteem	85	60	80
Understanding Others	75	55	60
Reading	75	55	85
Writing Skills	80	85	80
Mathematics	85	75	95
Interest in School and Learning	65	50	60
Societal Responsibility	60	60	65
Knowledge of Law/ Government	85	85	90
Health	75	80	70
Creative Activities	80	70	75
Career Awareness	85	90	90
Appreciating Human Accomplishments	50	45	55
Knowledge of Human Accomplishments	80	85	70
Information Usage	75	70	80

Sample 7

Assessment Results

AREA	Elementary #1	Elementary #2	Elementary #3	Elementary #4	Elementary #5	Middle School	High School
Self-Esteem	A	W	W	W	W	B	A
Understanding Others	A	B	A	W	W	W	W
Reading	A	A	W	B	W	A	W
Writing Skills	A	A	W	W	B	A	W
Mathematics	A	W	W	B	W	A	W
Interest in School and Learning	A	B	B	W	W	B	W
Societal Responsibility	A	W	W	W	W	W	A
Knowledge of Law/ Government	A	W	W	W	W	W	A
Health	A	W	W	W	W	W	W
Creative Activities	A	A	A	A	W	B	W
Career Awareness	A	A	W	W	W	W	A
Appreciating Human Accomplishments	A	W	B	A	W	W	W
Knowledge of Human Accomplishments	A	A	W	W	W	W	W
Information Usage	A	W	A	W	W	A	W

A = Above predicted band

W = Within predicted band

B = Below predicted band

Sample 8

	Self Esteem	Understanding Others	Reading	Writing Skills	Math	Interest in School and Learning	Societal Responsibility	Knowledge of Law and Government	Health	Creative Activities	Career Awareness	Appreciating Human Accomplishments	Knowledge of Human Accomplishments	Information Usage
Above Predicted Range	E1 SH	E1 E3	E1 E2 JH	E1 E2 JH	E1 JH	E1	E1 SH	E1 SH	E1	E1 E2 E3 E4	E1 E2 JH	E1 E4	E1 E2	E1 E3 JH
Within Predicted Range	E2 E3 E4 E5	E4 E5 JH SH	E3 E5 SH	E3 E4 SH	E2 E3 E5	E2 E3 E5 **JH**	E2 E3 E4 **E5** JH	E2 E3 E4 JH	E2 E3 E4 E5 JH SH	E5 SH	E3 E4 E5 SH	E2 E5 JH SH	E3 E4 E5 JH	E2 E4 E5 SH
Below Predicted Range	JH	E2	E4	E5	E4	E4 SH		E5		JH		E3		

Sample 9

SCHOOL DISTRICT EQA SUMMARY

	Schools Above Range	*Schools Within Range*	*Schools Below Range*
Self-Esteem		15	1
Understanding Others		15	1
Reading	4	11	1
Writing Skills	1	15	
Mathematics	2	14	
Interest in School and Learning	4	11	1
Societal Responsibility	2	14	
Knowledge of Law/Government	2	14	
Health and Safety Practices	2	14	
Creative Activities		12	4
Career Awareness	1	15	
Appreciating Human Accomplishments	2	10	4
Knowledge of Human Accomplishments	2	14	
Information Usage	2	13	1

Sample 10

UPPER PENN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Number of Elementary Schools Scoring

	Below 25th % ile	25th-50th % ile	51st-75th % ile	Above 75th % ile
Self-Esteem	1b	1	2	1
Understanding Others	0	2b	2	1
Reading	0	1b	2	2 a,a
Writing Skills	4b,b,b	1	0	0
Mathematics	1b	2b	0	2a
Interest in School and Learning	0	4b	1	0
Societal Responsibility	1b	1	3	0
Knowledge of Law/ Government	0	2b,b	2	1a
Health Knowledge	2b,b	3	0	0
Creative Activities	1b	1	2a	1a
Career Awareness	0	0	1	4a
Appreciating Human Accomplishments	1b	2b	0	2a
Knowledge of Human Accomplishments	0	4b	1	0
Information Usage	1b	1	3	0

a = above expected score range

b = below expected score range

EAST ELEMENTARY

1980 PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL NORMS - GRADE 5 SCHOOLS 1980

PERCENTILE DISTRIBUTION	PER-CENTILE RANK	SELF ESTEEM	UNDERSTANDING OTHERS	COMMUNICATION SKILLS: READING	COMMUNICATION SKILLS: WRITING	MATHEMATICS	INTEREST IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING	SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY	KNOWLEDGE OF LAW/GOVERNMENT	HEALTH KNOWLEDGE	CREATIVE ACTIVITIES	CAREER AWARENESS	APPRECIATING HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS	KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS	INFORMATION USAGE	PER-CENTILE RANK
	95	68.11	135.10	33.16	33.80	43.99	60.77	47.28	13.48	33.48	63.37	28.41	165.63	27.33	22.68	95
	90	66.67	131.47	32.29	33.00	42.55	59.63	46.46	13.03	32.77	61.07	27.64	162.14	26.10	22.01	90
	85	65.77	129.19	31.69	X 32.40	41.71	58.98	45.96	12.63	32.40	59.18	27.29	159.60	25.22	21.45	85
	80	65.12	127.85	30.95	31.82	41.03	58.35	45.57	12.35	32.02	58.13	27.00	157.90	24.62	21.09	80
	75	64.47	126.14	30.32	31.42	40.50	57.88	45.29	12.05	31.67	56.93	26.69	156.90	24.00	20.73	75
	70	63.84	125.20	29.82	31.04	39.56	57.28	45.00	11.81	31.32	56.00	26.40	155.51	23.64	20.42	70
	65	63.50	124.35	29.44	30.60	39.00	56.83	44.71	11.59	31.00	55.06	26.02	154.16	23.14	20.14	65
	60	63.08	123.11	28.92	30.23	38.53	56.32	44.44	11.38	30.65	54.53	25.67	152.83	22.71	19.85	60
	55	62.68	121.96	28.43	29.86	38.02	55.93	44.18	11.22	30.43 X	54.00	25.39	151.[illegible]	22.35	19.60	55
	50	62.39 X	120.80	28.06	29.30	37.67	55.52	43.93	11.05	30.[illegible]	53.39	25.10	149.42	21.93	19.21 X	50
	45	62.02	119.82	27.58	28.97	37.05 X	55.00	43.64	10.79 X	29.[illegible]0	52.50	24.83 X	148.07	21.48	18.96	45
	40	61.50	118.84 X	27.24	28.71	36.51	54.55	43.31 X	10.60	29.58	51.95	24.56	146.52	21.07	18.67	40
	35	61.00	117.71	26.72	28.20	36.00	54.21	42.99	10.35	29.28	51.35	24.20	145.57	20.69 X	18.25	35
	30	60.60	116.29	26.25 X	27.72	35.64	53.81	42.62	10.20	28.89	50.56	23.88	144.52	20.44	17.88	30
	25	60.23	115.00	25.62	27.26	35.08	53.29 X	42.25	9.93	28.57	49.48	23.57	142.91	19.96	17.35	25
	20	59.55	113.54	24.70	26.63	34.41	52.65	41.91	9.68	27.91	48.35	23.16	141.50	19.26	16.91	20
	15	58.98	112.01	23.94	26.12	33.70	52.13	41.31	9.44	27.43	47.10 X	22.68	139.88 X	18.60	16.54	15
	10	58.05	110.41	22.76	25.15	32.59	51.40	40.70	9.00	26.72	45.84	21.83	137.33	17.88	15.83	10
	5	56.73	108.00	21.15	23.87	30.82	49.50	39.39	8.32	25.00	43.81	20.53	133.59	16.37	14.55	5
STATE MEAN		62.32	120.84	27.78	29.20	37.56	55.44	43.69	10.99	29.84	53.41	24.91	149.64	21.93	19.00	
STANDARD DEVIATION		3.46	8.53	3.75	3.17	4.01	3.37	2.41	1.62	2.66	5.92	2.49	10.05	3.37	2.52	

X = Actual school mean score

_____ = Limits of predicted bands

Sample 11

Sample 12

UPPER PENN SCHOOL DISTRICT

State Percentile Rank

	School E_1	School E_2	School E_3	School E_4	School E_5	School JH_1	School JH_2	School SH
Self-Esteem	80	35	50	55	15b	40	55	85
Understanding Others	45b	80	40	75	65	30	35	30b
Reading	70	60	30b	9 .a	85a	85	50	20
Writing Skills	70	55	30b	45a	85a	80	45	20
Mathematics	10b	15b	10b	40	20	25	15b	25
Interest in School and Learning	15b	45	90a	80	45b	15	60	15b
Societal Responsibility	45	30	40	70	40b	10	30	5b
Knowledge of Law/ Government	50	35	40	70	40	40	50	25
Health	30	20b	50	55	60	5	30	5b
Creative Activities	35b	25b	50	85a	55	55b	70	55a
Career Awareness	45	40	15b	20b	45	20b	25	25
Appreciating Human Accomplishments	40	20b	70a	99a	60	40	75	20b
Knowledge of Human Accomplishments	45	40	75a	95a	60	45	80	25
Information Usage	70	55	35b	95a	80a	85	45	20

a=above prediction band
b=below prediction band

USE OF THE RESULTS

This may be one of the most important parts of the release, especially if the data are not extremely or entirely favorable. The district administrators should try to verbalize what they expect to do as a result of EQA or how they feel about the results. There are a few general statements that can help you begin.

Sample 1

The EQA has provided considerable data that otherwise would not be available to our district. The EQA has provided the school district with not only a valuable measurement tool for planning and decision making, but also with results of educational outcomes in both cognitive and affective domains. It also offers the opportunity for the results of local programs to be compared against results achieved in comparable schools in Pennsylvania.

Administrators and teachers will be looking for ways to help our students do better in all areas of EQA but especially in those areas where results were less than expected for Upper Penn Area students. The Pennsylvania Department of Education also provides reference materials to guide the improvement of local scores; and that information is being studied.

A state-initiated program, Long-Range Planning for School Improvement, requires our district to document how the EQA results are being used. The EQA data will provide a wide base of information to complete a needs assessment for the Long-Range Plan. A key element in the Long Range Plan will be using the EQA data to revise curriculum and plan for productive change within our schools.

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING ACHIEVEMENT

This may be a controversial element of your FQA release. It may, however, be the section of the release that gives the "pay-off" for taking the time to present the results. The report of the home influences could lead at least a few parents or community groups to take action toward improvement. Below are the approaches used in several districts.

Sample 1

Resources that schools have available to them often influence the achievement levels of students. While Educational Quality Assessment cannot obtain data on all conditions influencing achievement, 35 pieces of information that do relate to achievement are collected. However, not all information is available at each of the three grade levels assessed.

This section describes a few of those variables that were tested.

This presentation on student variables touches only a few of those about which data are collected. It is important to remember that this variable information is collected in order to make predictions about score ranges, but the information also provides useful insights into some conditions that might be influencing student achievement.

Sample 2

Our condition variable results tell us that:

1. Our teachers are about as satisfied as teachers in other schools with the way discipline is handled.
2. We have fewer low-income students than other schools.
3. We are spending considerably less per student than other schools.
4. Our socioeconomic level is about average for the state.
5. Most students feel their parents are supportive of the school and like hearing about school activities.
6. About one-third of our students watch 5 or more hours of television each night.
7. Teachers have less formal education and fewer years of teaching experience than teachers in other schools.

Sample 3

Three areas of concern on the elementary level were noted by the background information collected on the questionnaire. (1) Children are doing too little homework. (2) Children watch far too much television. (3) Too few children have access to books in the home.

Work has already begun to rectify two of these deficiencies. A new homework procedure has been developed and a manual, Parents' Guide to Homework in the Elementary Schools, has been distributed to each family.

Books no longer in use in the schools are being given to the children to take home for their personal libraries. Hundreds of books have already been distributed and happily received.

Unfortunately, no master switch can turn off the area's television sets on school nights. That's a job for parents.

Sample 4

Responses by the Upper Penn students to questions about television indicate that more than half of them watch three or more hours of TV each night. On the other hand, less than one-fourth of the students reported that they spend an hour or more on homework.

Administrators and teachers will be looking for ways to help the students do better in all areas of EQA but especially in those areas where recent results were less than expected for Upper Penn students. The PDE also provides reference materials to guide the improvement of local scores and that information is being studied.

School officials recommend a number of ways that parents can help. Parents can exercise more control over the time spent before the TV set and encourage students to set aside a certain time each night to do school work at home, even when no assignments are made by the teachers. For

information to be really learned, time must be spent in review and recitation. One might compare never doing school work at home to taking weekly piano lessons but never practicing between lessons.

Parents are encouraged to show more interest in what their children are doing in school and to become involved in the schools through organizations such as PTA and by attending school activities to find out more about the schools. Parents can set good examples for their children by being aware of how much time they spend watching television themselves and by bringing into the home good reading material and actually being seen reading once in awhile. Parents can listen closer when their children talk about what they learned in school or about what is going to be happening in school.

Sample 5

Responses to the questions about television indicate that more than half of the children watch television four or more hours each night. On the other hand, less than one-third of them reported that they spend an hour or more each night doing homework.

Children feel good about themselves and what they are doing when they are aware that their parents are interested. Parents are encouraged to show more interest in what their children are doing in school, to become involved in the school activities and to learn more about our programs. Parents can set good examples for their children by being aware of how much time they spend watching television themselves. Children who have quality reading material available and see their parents reading this material will be more apt to spend leisure time reading.

The eleventh grade results served as an example of the report provided by the state. In summarizing data for this group, Dr. Smith said: "Students in this school are fortunate to have teachers who are satisfied with teacher/parent relationships, are very well educated, and are fairly youthful in comparison with teachers in other schools in the state. Almost 90% of the teachers have very high regard for the values that parents place upon education. Teachers perceive that they have great influence upon instructional decisions. Almost every teacher believes effectiveness with students is enhanced by their teaching freedom, control over matters such as textbook selection and consultation before new programs are initiated. Discipline does not rank as a severe problem according to teachers."

It appears that highly educated parents with high paying jobs beget children who also aspire to high levels of education and higher paying occupations. The results were obtained through a student questionnaire which also revealed that students were in the 90th percentile in the amount of homework done by students, and only in the 10th percentile in time spent watching television on school nights.

Dr. Smith said, "It is unclear whether students are prodded from behind or pulled from the front. One thing is certain according to their answers: both home and school expect high performance in high school and

further education after graduation. More than 90% of our students anticipate training beyond high school."

About the same percentage of students feel their parents want them to be above average or one of the best in the class. Students also say that the teachers expect them to do average or better work.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT EQA

A means of spotlighting several issues without trying to work them into an integrated article is the question and answer format. This format was used in the initial flyer provided by the Department for distribution to the parents. Some of the same issues might be repeated in the release. You could choose from those below or create your own.

Do the questionnaire results provide reliable information?

Yes. The questionnaires are extensively field-tested before they become part of the program. They provide accurate and reliable information about students' achievement in fourteen performance areas.

Does the PDE offer help to improve school programs?

Yes. The PDE has initiated a major program to help schools improve their educational program. EQA serves as a key assessment of the district's needs as part of this program.

Who pays for the EQA program?

The PDE pays the major costs of the EQA program. Local school districts pay only for their employes' time, publicity releases and minimal postage and phone charges.

Can I find out my child's score?

No. The questionnaire is aimed at schools, not at individual students. Besides, there's no way to identify an individual's score because names don't appear on the answer sheets.

Are individual teachers held accountable for students' scores?

No. Final scores reflect previous learning experiences in the school, home and community, not just the instructional program for your child's grade.

What exactly is "quality education"?

In Pennsylvania "quality education" is defined as a process directed toward achieving the Goals of Quality Education. While many of these goals pertain to academic skills and knowledge, the others concern attitudes, interests, and participation. Attaining success in all goals assures the finest quality education.

What is Educational Quality Assessment (EQA)?

EQA provides schools with information about the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the student body and shows schools how they compare with others throughout the state. The major purpose of EQA is to give

schools information which will help them to improve or strengthen their programs.

Where can I get information about scores at a particular school?

Questions may be answered by individual school principals. Visit the school of interest or locate its phone number under "Upper Penn School District."

What is the value of EQA?

It offers the opportunity for the results of local programs to be compared against results achieved in comparable schools. EQA findings have real value only when educators use them to improve teaching and learning.

Does EQA have any impact on grade levels not assessed -- that is, grades other than 5, 8 and 11?

EQA measures the cumulative effect of all that has happened to students -- both in and out of school -- up until the time they were assessed.

When do school districts participate?

Every school district must participate at least once every five years. School districts may participate in the assessment as often as they wish, subject to the PDE's resource limitations. Upper Penn participated in 1974, 1977 and 1980.

What does a "predicted range" indicate?

If a school falls within that range for a particular area, that school is performing as other schools with a similar set of conditions. These projected scores are the key to interpreting how well a school has done. Scoring above the predicted range indicates that school processes have surpassed those in other schools while scoring below the predicted range indicates that the processes are not matching those in other schools with similar sets of conditions.

Is the school alone held accountable for poor test results?

No. Student attitudes and achievement are a complex product of each student's home, school and community experiences.

What will Upper Penn do with the EQA results?

Each school receives a comprehensive analysis of its performance. Faculties will be reviewing their scores and will consider changing their programs where needed. Another state-initiated program, Long Range Planning for School Improvement, requires the district to document how EQA results are being used.

Since the fourteen areas measured do not match actually to the twelve goals of quality education, the inclusion of the goals in an EQA release is a delicate issue. If the goals are important to your district, use them.

PREAMBLE

The constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania states, "The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth." This provision mandates a quality education for each child in the Commonwealth.

The schools have the primary responsibility for the achievement of the goals of quality education as established by the State Board of Education, but they must work in close and continuous cooperation with the family, community and other appropriate social, religious and governmental institutions to insure the highest possible achievement of the goals.

To foster achievement of a quality education, the school environment should be safe, attractive and orderly, promote a willingness to work for objectives, stimulate a readiness to continue learning throughout life, and encourage the fullest possible educational development of each student.

To foster achievement of a quality education, the school program should reflect the goals listed.

GOALS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

(Adopted by the State Board of Education on March 8, 1979)

COMMUNICATION SKILLS
Quality education should help every student acquire communication skills of understanding, speaking, reading and writing.

MATHEMATICS
Quality education should help every student acquire skills in mathematics.

SELF-ESTEEM
Quality education should help every student develop self-understanding and a feeling of self-worth.

ANALYTICAL THINKING
Quality education should help every student develop analytical thinking skills.

UNDERSTANDING OTHERS
Quality education should help every student acquire knowledge of different cultures and an appreciation of the worth of all people.

CITIZENSHIP
Quality education should help every student learn the history of the nation, understand its systems of government and economics and acquire the values and attitudes necessary for responsible citizenship.

ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES
Quality education should help every student acquire knowledge, appreciation and skills in the arts and the humanities.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Quality education should help every student acquire knowledge, understanding and appreciation of science and technology.

WORK
Quality education should help every student acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become a self-supporting member of society.

FAMILY LIVING
Quality education should help every student acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for successful personal and family living.

HEALTH
Quality education should help every student acquire knowledge and develop practices necessary to maintain physical and emotional well-being.

ENVIRONMENT
Quality education should help every student acquire the knowledge and attitudes necessary to maintain the quality of life in a balanced environment.

THE CONCLUSION

What's next? Where does the release leave off? Below are a few final statements that are intended to promote further action.

Sample 1

Persons interested in more information about the EQA program and in helping their children achieve to the highest potential are encouraged to contact the principal of the building where their child attends.

Sample 2

John Jones, director of curriculum, pointed out: "No written, narrative report can begin to communicate all the valuable insights into our school we have gained through our participation in Educational Quality Assessment."

Each school's report will be presented at a series of meetings in January at the respective schools. At that time parents and interested citizens will be able to view in more detail the report for their schools and have an opportunity for discussion and to ask questions.

Educational Quality Assessment reports are not prescriptive, Dr. Doe concluded: "The state isn't trying to tell us what's right or wrong, good or bad, or what to do now. They do provide us a great deal of information which is the starting point for self-analysis. We see some strengths in our school programs. We see some weaknesses. It is our task as a school district and as a community to capitalize on our assets and to overcome our shortcomings."

Sample 3

Now that the results have been presented to the board and released to the public, they will be thoroughly studied and discussed by the administration, each school's staff, interested parents and other members of the community.

Critical areas will be identified for each school and priorities set. Plans will be made for program improvement and a tentative time schedule developed.

For further information about Upper Penn's EQA results, you can contact Joseph Jones, Director of Elementary Education, or Phil Thomas, Director of Secondary Education, or the principal of the schools in which you are interested.

Sample 4

The school and community can work together with the home to help provide students with positive alternatives to watching television excessively. Persons interested in more information about the EQA program, and in helping their students to achieve better, are encouraged to contact school officials in the building that their child attends.